CLAIMS

1.   (Previously presented) A method for bridging a teleconferencing system and an instant messaging system, comprising the steps of:

receiving at a speech processing device a speech input received by said teleconferencing system from a telephone connected to the teleconferencing system;

transcribing the speech input to a first text message by the speech processing device;

transmitting the first text message to a plurality of instant messaging devices participating in an instant messaging based conference managed by the instant messaging system;

receiving at the speech processing device a second text message from any one among the plurality of instant messaging devices participating in the instant messaging based conference;

converting the second text message to a speech output; and

transmitting the speech output to a plurality of telephones participating in a teleconference managed by the teleconferencing system;

wherein the speech processing device serves as a bridge between the teleconferencing system and the messaging system, the speech processing device being directly coupled between the teleconferencing system and the instant messaging system and/or coupled between the teleconferencing system and the instant messaging system via a data network, the speech processing device being configured to convert a speech input into a text message and/or a text message into a speech output.

2.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of converting the second text message further comprises the step of using a simulated voice print of the user associated with any one among the plurality of instant messaging devices to provide the speech output with a personalized voice output at the telephones.

3.   (Cancelled)

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of translating the first text message to another language to provide a translated first text message.

5.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

       prior to said step of receiving a speech input, identifying a user associated with said
telephone;

       prior to said converting step, translating the second text message to another language to
provide a translated second text message for subsequent speech output, wherein said another
language is specified by a profile associated with said identified user associated with said telephone.

6.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting the first text
message comprises the step of transmitting a text stream.

7-19.   (Cancelled)

20.   (Previously presented) A speech processing device for use in a system comprising a
teleconferencing system and an instant messaging system, the speech processing device adapted to
provide a bridge between the teleconferencing system and the messaging system and to be coupled
between the teleconferencing system and the instant messaging system directly and/or via a data
network, the speech processing device comprising at least one processor programmed to:

       convert a speech input into a text message and/or a text message into a speech output;

       receive a speech input received by said teleconferencing system from a telephone connected
to the teleconferencing system;

       transcribe the speech input to a first text message;

       transmit the first text message to a plurality of instant messaging devices participating in an
instant messaging based conference managed by the instant messaging system;

       receive a second text message from any one among the plurality of instant messaging
devices participating in the instant messaging based conference;

       convert the second text message to a speech output; and

       transmit the speech output to a plurality of telephones participating in a teleconference
managed by the teleconferencing system.

21.   (Previously presented) The speech processing device of claim 20, wherein a conversion of the second text message comprises using a simulated voice print of a user associated with any one among the plurality of instant messaging devices to provide the speech output with a personalized voice output at the telephones.

22.   (Previously presented) The speech processing device of claim 20, wherein the at least one processor is further programmed to translate the first text message to another language to provide a translated first text message.

23.   (Previously presented) The speech processing device of claim 20, wherein the at least one processor is further programmed to:

        prior to receiving the speech input, identifying a user associated with the telephone;

        prior to converting the speech input into a text message, translating the text message to another language to provide a translated second text message for subsequent speech output, wherein the another language is specified by a profile associated with the identified user associated with said telephone.

24.   (Previously presented) The speech processing device of claim 20, wherein the transmission of the first text message comprises a transmission of a text stream.